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129

Editorial: 15 years of *Alytes*

Founded in February 1982, *Alytes* is now reaching the term of its fifteenth year of existence. Started as a modest national bulletin, its printing standard and the quality of its contents have been regularly increasing over the years. The journal has now published a number of interesting and important papers and is now recognized worldwide as a major scientific periodical dealing with all aspects of the study of amphibians. This is also testified by the growing mean quality of manuscripts submitted for publication in the journal over the years.

The experience accumulated by the editorial team of the journal over this fifteen-year period has allowed us to make important progress in several respects, and, in particular, regarding the standards of preparation and processing of manuscripts necessary to obtain a high quality journal. We think it is useful to share this experience with our readers and with potential authors of papers intended for publication in *Alytes*. For this reason, we present in this issue very detailed *Instructions to Authors*, which will hopefully prove useful to colleagues to prepare high quality manuscripts and will contribute to a further increase in the standards of the journal.

We feel that the experience of these first fifteen years has amply demonstrated that an international journal of batrachology was really needed. Gathering together of papers once dispersed in various journals, written in three major languages, and concerning very diverse aspects of the study of a relatively poorly known group of vertebrates, has proved extremely stimulating, and will no doubt become more and more productive as time goes on. The recent international interest in the problems of conservation of amphibian populations and species has also clearly emphasized the need for a particular effort of the international community, not only to understand the causes of the observed declines and to try and stop or reduce them, but also to increase and speed up our efforts for the mere work of inventory and description of amphibian species on our planet: it is now clear that, if we delay considering this task as a major priority for amphibian specialists of our time, many amphibian taxa will become extinct in the forthcoming years, without their having even been collected and recognized by man. This is well exemplified in this issue of *Alytes*, which contains the descriptions of several new species, all of which are clearly threatened with extinction, and some of which may even be already extinct as these descriptions are published. It is rather unusual to publish a paper dealing with the contemporaneous fauna that describes four new species but at the same time states that they were probably "already" extinct when these descriptions were written. Unfortunately, it is very likely that in the coming future we will have to confront such situations more and more often, as a consequence of ongoing massive destructions or extensive modifications of amphibians' habitats throughout the world. It results from this that basic alpha taxonomic work of inventory and description of amphibian species is an urgent matter that should deserve all our attention, including the creation of academic positions and financial support for field work, collection management and descriptive activity. All well considered, this might be much more urgent than concentrating all efforts on more "theoretical" issues of biology, however interesting and important the latter may be. Understanding of these priorities is the reason for the clear choice made in *Alytes* to encourage publication of "purely descriptive" papers of high quality, which has been characteristic of the journal since its beginnings and which will continue to be so in the years to come.

Alain DUBOIS
Alytes Chief Editor
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